Tips and Tricks for Researching Historic Records

The Clerk's Office Historic Records and Deed Research Division provides access to a number of documents that can be used for property research, genealogy, and local history. Based on some of the questions we have received from patrons, or have experienced in our own work, this flyer provides some tips and tricks for finding information. The Historic Records team has worked to provide online indexes for many of the records found in the Clerk's Office. These indexes are found on the Loudoun County Clerk of the Circuit Court's webpage under the Historic Records and Deed Research Division tab. Please check back often as we update the indexes frequently. https://www.loudoun.gov/clerk-archives



- 1. Wills can provide useful information about a deceased person's family and the distribution of their property, but do not disregard other fiduciary records. The names of family members can be found in estate accounts, sale bills, notes, and bonds. These records can also provide you information about the deceased person's interests, occupation, and even the layout of their home furnishings which can often be found in the inventory of the person's estate.
- 2. Cannot find a will or marriage record linking individuals you know are related? Consider researching deeds. Sometimes you can find out genealogical information from land deeded from generation to generation. If you can't find a marriage record but an individual owned land you can see if the wife's name is listed on a deed as a grantor.
- 3. Trying to find record of a person you suspect lived in Loudoun, but they did not own land, nor married or died in the county? If you are looking for early records consider the Tithables which list the names of taxable persons consisting of mostly men over the age of 16 and enslaved people. Judgments often include names of individuals who did not own property and cannot be found in other records. Road Cases can also provide names and the locations of individuals not listed elsewhere. Even if an individual did not own land they often worked on the road near where they lived to keep it in good condition.
- 4. Birth Records tell you more than just a birthday. The Birth Register from 1850-1866 shows not only the name of the child born, their birth date, and parents, but also where the family lived, what the father did for a living, and reference other family members, neighbors, or friends. Death Records provide information about a person's death including their name, date of death, cause of death, and location. It may also provide record of the person's family including spouse, and parents. These records also trace common illnesses of the time period, and can be used to create statistical studies on the kinds of illnesses that were common in certain regions and certain months of the year.
- 5. Looking for records of free people of color, or people who were a part of the enslaved community before the Civil War? Try looking through our online indexes for Black History including Enslaved Papers, Free Black Papers, and the Free Negro Record Book 1844-1861. These documents record emancipation, and registrations of free blacks in Loudoun County.
- 6. Chancery Records and Guardian Papers can provide information about family members and the distribution of property. They can also, however, show the kinds of items certain individuals used, as well as the kinds of businesses that existed during certain time frames in history.

Tips For Preserving Your Records At Home

Storage:

- Keep archival materials out of direct sunlight which can cause the paper to fade and deteriorate more quickly.
- Try to keep records in a cooler environment.
- Store documents in acid free boxes or acid free folders
- Photo's should be in acid free folders, sleeves, or boxes
- Keep away from water sources
- If framing a photo make sure to use an acid free mat and UV protected glass
- Store in a safe place away from Insects and Rodents
- Make sure that you do your research. When purchasing acid free storage products make sure you are buying from a reputable company and that the products are truly acid free.
- The fewer folds that you have in your documents the better it is for the document. Make sure that the containers or folders you are purchasing are the correct size to prevent unnecessary folds. Folds weaken the paper and can lead to tears or other damage in the future.
- It is always a good idea to have photos and documents scanned so that you have a digital version of your records.

Repairs:

- DO NOT store items secured with a rubber band. It will dry rot and damage your records.
- DO NOT store items secured with a staple or metal brad. These items will rust over time and damage your documents.
- DO NOT use scotch tape, masking tape, painters tape, or any other type of tape or adhesive other than an approved archival repair tape.
- Items like blue prints and photo's that "off gas" (Strong Odor) should be stored in an area where the odor can escape. If these documents are stored in a sealed container with other documents all of the documents may take on the smell of the "off gas."
- If a document in your collection had been repaired in the past with scotch tape, do not pull the tape off as it can lead to more severe damage. Either wait for the scotch tape to fall off itself or contact a reputable conservator.

Resources:

How to Preserve Family Papers and Photographs. National Archives https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/

Personal Archiving. Library of Congress http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/index.html